

# Interactive Multi-Media in Large Core Courses

## In Search of a Textbook for an eReader Generation

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### Abstract

This study explores how students use learning resources – traditional paper textbooks and etexts – in "Introduction to Musicology," a required large course for Bachelor of Music students. For this study, the researchers designed a new multimedia module on John Cage (a highly influential musical figure), which was assigned for optional/extra credit use in the course. The researchers distributed a post-survey to all 125 students in Musicology 140 after the module test was completed, and there were 99 responses, a 79% response rate. The survey addressed students' reported use of traditional and etextbooks, as well as their views of the role of these resources in their learning.

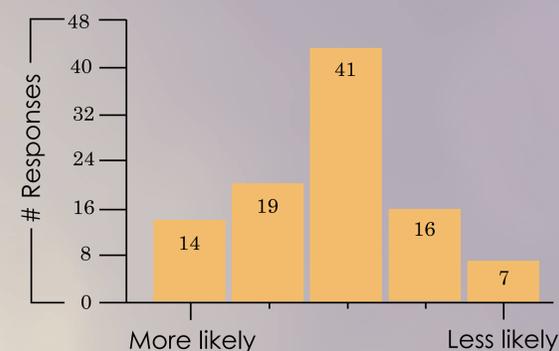
### Etext and Textbook Use

Based on analytics, most students (77%) used the optional module, and there was no statistically significant difference in prior GPA comparing users and non-users. Students were also assigned a traditional textbook, and based on self-reports, nearly all (98%) used the traditional text at some point in the term.

### Key Findings

#### Student Views of Etexts

Does an etextbook option make you more or less likely to use a course textbook?



#### Top categories of Student feedback on etexts

*The Module would work best if the layout were more like textbook chapters, organized into discrete sections.*

(18 responses)

*The Module should incorporate more traditional reading.*

(18 responses)

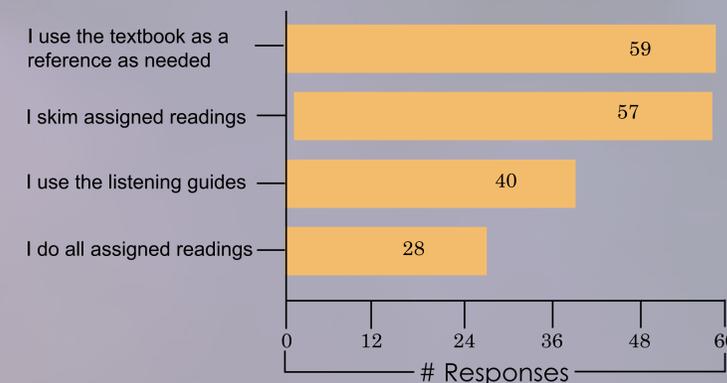
*The Module should have an easily accessible site map, or table of contents, which clearly lays out material that must be "collected"/retained.*

(8 responses)

For etexts, many students favored more traditional textbook features over increased engagement/interaction. They wanted the module to do more to organize and prioritize the presented information for them.

#### Student Views of Traditional Textbooks

When a course textbook is assigned, how do you use it?



#### Top categories of Student feedback on textbooks

*I use a textbook to:*

- *Obtain course fundamentals, making it easier to identify the "right" answers and avoid unreliable online sources.* (36 responses)
- *Fill gaps in lecture notes.* (22 responses)
- *Use as a study aid for exams, in conjunction with lecture notes.* (14 responses)
- *Learn content through getting feedback on graded reading assignments.* (14 responses)

*"Courses need unity and a 'final say' for information, other than the professor's word."*

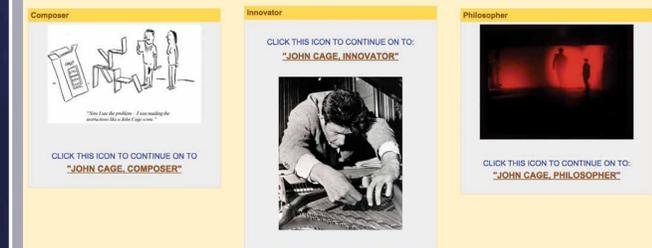
*"I find that a good lecture can concisely cover all of the material better through independent, adaptive teaching methods than through a set book, which is often obstinate and uninteresting."*

### Teaching Approach

#### Module Use

It is easy to navigate the John Cage module.

It Starts [here](#) with a choice of three entry points: "John Cage, Composer," "John Cage, Innovator," and "John Cage, Philosopher." Organized by theme, each portal represents a bundle of textual explanations, audio music files, and a variety of learning resources that is designed to enhance your understanding of this highly influential musical figure.



### Implications for Teaching

A course textbook represents a student's perception of the course as a whole, as opposed to one possible resource for learning course material. Students who consistently expressed an interest in additional support/guidance in their learning often had highly contradictory feelings. They often described "all-purpose" resources as the ideal, repositories of all "need-to-know" class content that also allow for in-depth exploration.

The enjoyment and added value of interactive class materials was often secondary to issues of student preparedness. To make best use of these resources, instructors should carefully consider:

1. Do students understand how to make efficient use of the supplementary resources?
2. Do the supplementary resources allow students to adapt the course to their needs?

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